

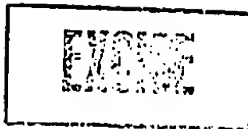
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China: What's Behind the 1987 Disturbances in Tibet?

IRR No. 143 - January 20, 1988



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(U) China: What's Behind the 1987 Disturbances in Tibet?

Intelligence Research Report

No. 143
January 20, 1988

(C) Key Judgments

Sino-Tibetan friction goes back for centuries, although before 1949 clashes were usually limited to the periphery of each side's sphere of effective control. Since the People's Liberation Army (PLA) first entered Tibet in 1950, tension between the Chinese^{1/} and Tibetans has intermittently smoldered and flared up in violent confrontation. In September-October 1987, demonstrations by supporters of the Dalai Lama's call for an independent Tibet resulted in the most violent clash with government officials since the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Perhaps as many as 20 persons died and several hundred were injured.

These incidents were only the most recent flareup over real and perceived grievances by a fiercely independent and devoutly religious people who resent the economic and political dominance, cultural chauvinism, religious discrimination, and military presence of the "alien" Han Chinese. Tibetans harbor deep-seated resentment about Chinese criticism of the Dalai

^{1/} (U) Throughout this report, the terms "Chinese" and "Han" are used more or less interchangeably as ethnic distinctions from "Tibetan." No political significance should be attributed to the use of any of these three terms.

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Lama, whom many still revere as their rightful ruler. From 1952 to 1956, insurgents carried on a bloody guerrilla war in eastern Tibet. By 1959, intermittent disturbances had spread throughout Tibet and escalated into full-scale rebellion. After the PLA broke the back of the uprising and many Tibetans fled to India and Nepal, the exiles kept up cross-border raids for at least the next 15 years.

With the coming to power of Deng Xiaoping in 1977, PRC policy on Tibet began to change, and violent confrontation subsided. Nevertheless, Han-Tibetan friction remained and periodically broke to the surface. In 1980, for example, two fact-finding visits by delegations from the Dalai Lama were cut short by the Chinese when several thousand Tibetans demonstrated their loyalty to the Dalai and his platform of independence.

The recent protests come at a time when Beijing is working hard to make up for past mistakes. Cultural and religious policy in Tibet is the most liberal since the PLA crushed the Tibetan rebellion in 1959. Economic subsidies, technical and educational assistance, and preferential taxation, foreign trade, and investment policies have been introduced. Until the increase in border tension with India last winter, the PLA appeared to have significantly reduced its presence in Tibet. Chinese officials, proud of their record in Tibet since 1980, have been perplexed and annoyed by the extent and vehemence of Tibetan feelings and foreign criticism.

Signs that Beijing's effort to bring Tibet into the mainstream of Chinese-style development is beginning to succeed may be a major factor behind the recent unrest. Many Tibetans, both at home and among the exile community abroad, fear that such success portends the destruction of Tibetan culture and undermines the viability of their appeal. At the same time, Tibetans--especially impatient youths--may have feared that the January 1986 removal of party chief Hu Yaobang and the subsequent campaign against "bourgeois liberalization" presaged a rollback of current policy.

Concern that talks between the Dalai and Beijing had reached an impasse during the last year may also have played a role. As recently as 1985, both Beijing and Dharmasala appeared confident that the Dalai might return to China for a visit in the near future.

For unknown reasons apparently having to do with internal politics in the two camps, both sides appeared to harden their positions in 1985, and talks broke down. Tibetans at home and abroad began vigorously to promote international interest in and support for their cause, especially in the United Nations,

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India, the US Congress, and other influential political centers. They reportedly began to send agitators from India into Tibet. The Dalai's September 18-28 trip to the US was part of this year-long "consciousness raising" effort. His September 21 speech before members of Congress proposing a "five point peace plan," as well as a number of Congressional resolutions and statements, seem to have played a significant role in encouraging Tibetans at home to believe they had international backing for their activities.

In response to the recent disturbances, Beijing has tightened access to Tibet, expelled all foreign journalists and several other foreigners from the region, and arrested a number of those involved in the demonstrations. The Communist Party and regional government will likely take a close look at the reliability of Tibetan party members, cadres, and security forces. Nevertheless, Beijing's more liberal policies in Tibet do not appear to be in jeopardy.

Over the longer term, both Beijing and the Dalai's camp may have learned a costly lesson: Beijing now realizes that despite its more liberal policies, Chinese rule is still intensely unpopular; and the exiles have found that confrontation still meets with repression at home, but gains little support abroad. Since the clashes took place, both sides have reaffirmed their intention to resume dialogue and seek a solution to their differences.

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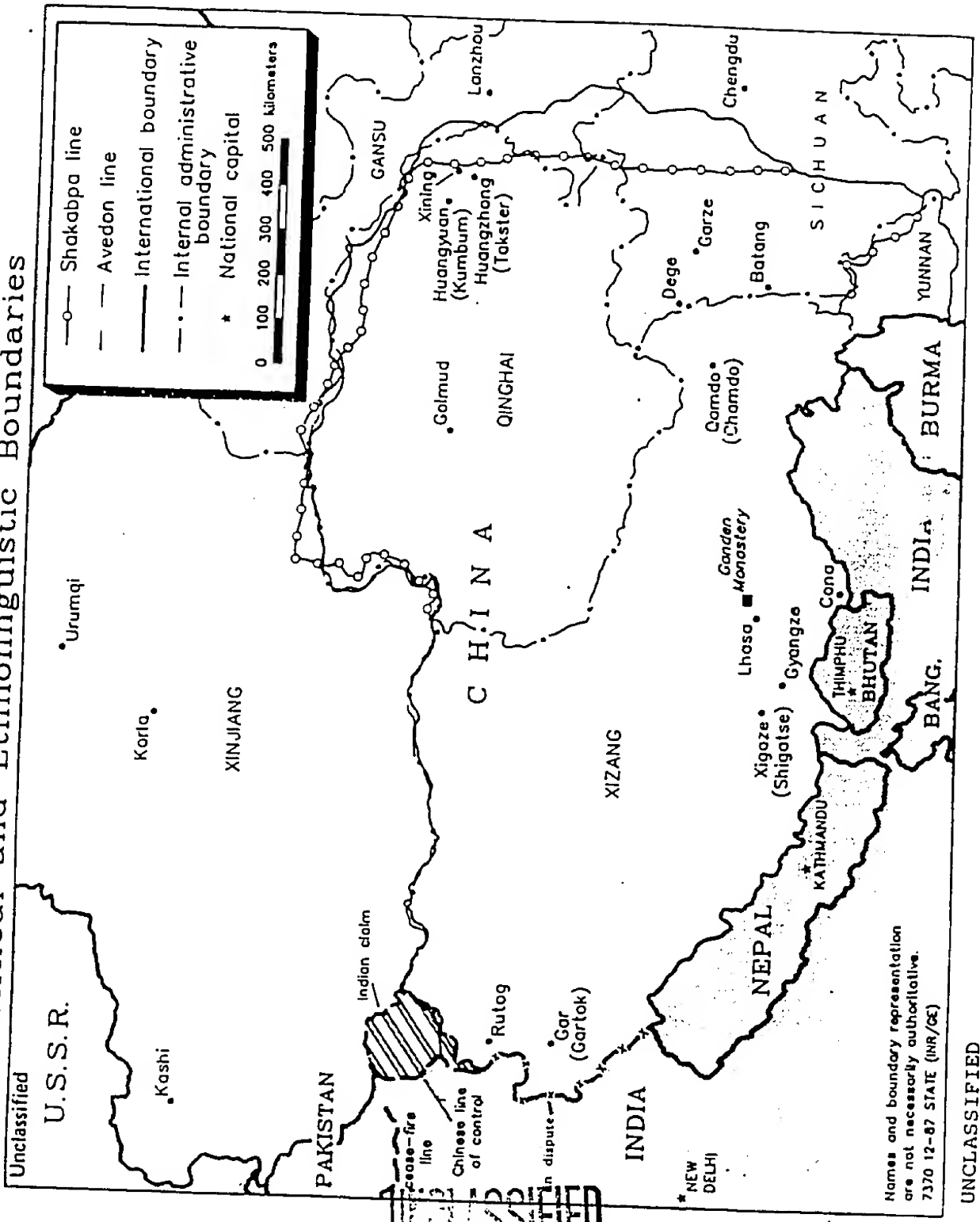
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TIBET: Political and Ethnolinguistic Boundaries

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Background^{2/}

(S/NF) The reasons for the timing of the recent incidents are complex. Some of the factors include:

--Tibetans at home and abroad perceive--and have vigorously promoted--increased international interest in and support for their cause during the past year. In particular, the Dalai Lama's September 18-28 trip to the US was expected to focus attention on Tibet.

--Advance planning linked to the Dalai's trip almost certainly played a role; foreign supporters of the independence movement were in Tibet.

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--The execution of from one to three Tibetans by the Chinese on September 24-25 may have been a catalyst.

--Finally, traditional beliefs may have influenced the timing. One monk told a foreign reporter in Lhasa that Tibetan religious leaders believed that the advent of the "year of the dragon" in a few months would bring the return of the Dalai, and that natural portents in late September provided the signal for recent demonstrations.

(C) A note of caution is warranted, however. Evidence on the Tibetan situation almost always is fragmentary and problematic; most information comes from either the highly partisan supporters of the self-exiled Dalai or the equally biased PRC Government. (See Appendices A and B.) The exiles in particular have undermined their own credibility by publicizing "statistics" that are patently inflated, implausible, and inflammatory. Only recently have relatively objective foreign observers gained access to Tibet, but most of them are hampered by inability to speak Tibetan or talk with Tibetans without the presence of Chinese "guides."

^{2/} (U) A selected bibliography follows the appendices of this report.

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Tibet Before 1950

(LOU) Although China was recognized internationally as suzerain over Tibet, effective control by China was extremely limited from the mid-19th century until the rise of the communists in 1949 (see chronology, Appendix C).

(LOU) Pre-1950 Tibet can best be described as a feudal theocracy. Political power was monopolized by a few dozen powerful families that supplied the pool from which the Tibetan leadership--both religious and secular--was drawn. Almost all land was controlled by the same small group, with more than one-third of the total under the administration of the clergy, one-third under the Lhasa government, and one-fourth under the lay nobility.

(LOU) Thousands of "monasteries"--some containing upwards of 10,000 "monks," others only one or two--dotted the countryside. Their occupants are estimated to have made up between one-fifth and one-third of Tibet's male population. Their leadership dominated local politics and jointly administered the "national" government in conjunction with government officials drawn from the nobility.

(LOU) Just as monasteries were highly variable in size and quality, however, "monk" was a flexible term in Tibet. Only a minority of the male inhabitants of monasteries were educated religious figures; the majority served in menial capacities within the monastic community. Many of them were the children of poor families, turned over to a monastery partly out of religious devotion and partly to assure the child adequate food, clothing, shelter, and a chance at an education. Only the most highly educated and prestigious monks bore the title "lama."

(LOU) The majority of the population--probably 60 percent--consisted of semi-serfs who received the right to work the land in exchange for taxes and corvee labor. Nomads, subject to little control by lay or religious officials, made up another 20 percent of the population. Religiously devout, Tibetan commoners appear to have accepted their status as reflecting their "karma" (fate predetermined by reincarnation) and the natural order of things. Peasant rebellions, a conspicuous element in Chinese history, are totally absent from the annals of Tibet.

(LOU) Tibet's judicial system was much less developed than those of most modern societies; neither crime nor punishment was clearly defined. Banditry was endemic in the countryside; bribery was required to transact commercial or government

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business. Tibet's army and police force were rudimentary and purportedly often as much a part of the problem as a contribution to the solution. Government and monastic officials administered a rough sort of justice--often marred by corruption--in which mutilation and flogging were common punishments. The death penalty, forbidden by the Buddhist injunction against taking life, was infrequent.

(LOU) Education in pre-1950 Tibet was not widespread--even among monastics, perhaps only 10-25 percent were literate. Tibetans lived in a rough ecological balance; living standards were spartan, health care rudimentary to nonexistent, diet poor and monotonous, and life spans short. Fragmentary evidence suggests that Tibet's population suffered a long-term decline before 1950, the apparent result of the monasteries' removal from the lay population of a large number of young males, the common practice of polyandry, and widespread infertility due to epidemic venereal disease.

(LOU) Religion was the centerpiece of Tibetan life. Four principal Buddhist sects shared religious and secular authority, but the Gelugpa ("Yellow Hat") sect, led by the Dalai Lama, was predominant from the 15th century. The Dalai, considered to be the reincarnation of Chenrezig (the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, or Buddha of Compassion), ruled from the Potala palace in Lhasa. (See Appendix D.)

(U) Traditionally, Tibet was composed of three regions: U-tsang (Central Tibet), Amdo (now Qinghai), and Kham, an area now spanning parts of Yunnan, Sichuan, Gansu, and the eastern section of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Central Tibet, in turn, was made up of several distinct sections: the Lhasa area (called U); the southwestern section, centered on the city of Shigatse (Xigatse), called Tsang; the Changthang, the desolate plateau to the north and west of the populated, riverine valleys; and Ngari, the far western section bordering on Nepal and India.

(LOU) From the 15th century, a central government, headed by the Dalai Lama or his regent, attempted to administer Tibet from Lhasa. The government's writ varied considerably in different regions, however, and generally decreased proportionally with the distance from the capital. At various times, Tsang, under the governance of the Panchen Lama (see Appendix E), exercised considerable autonomy from the Lhasa-based government. Amdo and Kham, particularly the latter, devoutly acknowledged the religious supremacy of the Dalai but vigorously resisted efforts at political domination by Lhasa. In western Tibet, banditry was endemic and the government's presence almost nonexistent.

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The Chinese Assert Control

(U) The Chinese Red Army passed through extreme eastern Tibet during its 1935 Long March, spreading its message of communism--unsuccessfully--and recruiting a handful of ethnic Tibetan who would later return as Chinese administrators. After Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang forces fled the mainland for Taiwan, the Communist Party sought to assert China's centuries-old claim that Tibet was an inalienable part of Chinese sovereign territory. On October 7, 1950, troops of the People's Liberation Army began to move into eastern Tibet.

(LOU) In the midst of this crisis, Lhasa replaced the governor of Chamdo, whose tour of duty had just expired, with Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, a former Chamdo governor, member of the nobility, and brother-in-law of the Dalai. New on the scene, Ngapoi was unable firmly to pull together the various Khampa clans to organize effective resistance. With the military situation quickly deteriorating, Ngapoi fled on October 17. Exile accounts--not unbiased, to be sure--depict his flight as somewhere between inglorious and cowardly. Ngapoi was quickly captured, however, and thereafter cooperated with the Chinese, holding a series of high offices in Tibet from 1950 to the present. Alarmed at the prospect that Chinese troops might march on Lhasa, the Dalai and his government fled on December 19 to Yatung, on the Tibetan border only a few hours' march from India.

(LOU) With the approval of the Tibetan cabinet, Ngapoi and a delegation of Tibetans travelled to Beijing, arriving during the last week of April 1951. Negotiations on the future status of Tibet resulted in the signing of a 17-point agreement on May 23. The PLA's top general in Tibet, Zhang Jingwu, travelled to Yatung to explain the agreement to the Dalai and his government. Despite apparently serious reservations, the Dalai returned to Lhasa on August 17 and did not repudiate the agreement.

(LOU) The 17-Point Agreement

Under the agreement, the Tibetans gave up claims to independence, ceded authority over foreign and defense affairs to Beijing, and agreed to the incorporation of the Tibetan army into the PLA. The Chinese pledged to maintain Tibetan "regional autonomy"; not to alter the existing political system or change the status or functions of the Dalai Lama; to respect and protect the religious and social customs of the Tibetan people; and to refrain from imposing "reforms." On September 9, 1951, 3,000 PLA troops peacefully entered Lhasa and Gen. Zhang Jingwu took control of the Work Committee of the Chinese Communist

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Party for the Tibetan Area. Perhaps 20,000-30,000 more PLA troops were distributed throughout Central Tibet.

The Chinese appear to have made a conscientious effort during the next several years to live up to their understanding of the 17-point agreement. Even such a strong critic of Chinese activity in Tibet as the former head of the British mission in Lhasa, Hugh E. Richardson, avers that "the Chinese, in their early contacts with Tibetan officials and people made a genuine effort to be disciplined and to appear friendly and co-operative."

Chinese officials sought to garner support among all classes of Tibetan society, yet at the same time exploit class, regional, and factional differences to bolster their own position. Although avoiding direct attacks on the social or political status of the monastic and secular elites and seeking to coopt many of them into the new government, Han officials took steps to secularize government administration and began to undermine many of the traditional sources of upper class control over the peasantry. The new government began to break down the bases of traditional class ties by introducing usury laws and providing bank loans for planting expenses, opening state and collective stores to sell consumer goods, providing agricultural extension services, making cash payments for corvee labor, and introducing modern medical and veterinary services.

The Han further enhanced their prestige and influence with the lower classes by opening free primary schools and providing jobs in construction and a few newly opened industrial and energy facilities.

Despite Han efforts to maintain a broad "united front" appeal to most elements in Tibetan society, friction was inevitable. Han and Tibetans came from vastly different cultural backgrounds. Most of the PLA troops were ill-educated peasants who brought to Tibet a strong sense of Han cultural superiority and a disdain for the "backward," "dirty," and "superstitious" Tibetans. Moreover, PLA troops had been heavily indoctrinated since their induction with the ideology of class struggle, and some had engaged in land reform attacks on "class enemies" in interior sections of China. More recent injunctions to maintain "united front" solidarity with the Tibetans provided at best a surface veneer on a generally disdainful, even hostile, basic attitude, in spite of the Han leadership's best intentions.

Moreover, from Beijing's point of view, the 17-point agreement applied only to Central Tibet--the area under the

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Dalai's direct control. Amdo (Qinghai) and much of Kham (eastern Tibet) had been incorporated into Chinese provinces even under the KMT, and Beijing made no pretext of protecting these areas from the introduction of social and political reforms then being introduced in the rest of China. The two areas contained a large proportion of the Tibetan-speaking population.

(LOU) The "Honeymoon" Period in Central Tibet

Having been persuaded to return to Lhasa, the Dalai--then only 16 years old--apparently decided to try to make the best of the situation. No foreign support for Tibetan independence was forthcoming, and on April 29, 1954, China and India signed an agreement by which India accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet but preserved some of India's traditional trading privileges.

In 1954, the Dalai accepted an invitation to visit Beijing for the first session of the National People's Congress--his first trip outside of greater Tibet--despite fears among his conservative advisers that he might not be allowed to return or that the Chinese would be able to take advantage of having him on their home ground to extract concessions. The Chinese displayed overwhelming hospitality, Mao Zedong and the Dalai exchanged compliments, and the Dalai returned to Lhasa at the end of June 1955, apparently believing that he could work with Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai.

On March 9, 1955, while the Dalai was still in Beijing, the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet was established. Of its 55 members, 50 were Tibetan and only 5 were Han; the Dalai was named chairman and the Panchen Lama vice chairman. The composition of the preparatory committee again shows the Chinese strategy of maximizing their influence by capitalizing on divisions among the Tibetans: Of the 55 Tibetan members, only 10 represented the Dalai's administration. The Panchen's Xigatse government also had 10 seats; 10 were from Chamdo, and 17 were from religious and "popular" organizations, apparently including the newly established youth and women's federations.

Relations between Beijing and the Dalai's government remained relatively cordial during this period. Throughout 1955-56 the Dalai appears to have remained cautiously optimistic, reportedly hearing only fragmentary rumors about outbreaks of violence in eastern Tibet. Indicative of Chinese confidence, the PRC--after initial hesitation--decided to allow the Dalai to travel to India in November 1956 for the 2,500th anniversary celebration of the Buddha's birth. After a five-month stay, he returned to Lhasa.

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Throughout the period 1950-59, Central Tibet was exempt from the various political campaigns, land reform, and class struggle going on in the rest of China--including Amdo and Kham. Han administrators and the PLA barely had contact with common Tibetans and seem to have made almost no effort to "convert" them to communism. Beijing had begun, however, a major road-building program in Tibet which by 1957 linked Sichuan with Central Tibet and extended all the way to Xinjiang. But the influx of troops, civilian administrators, and civil engineers, and the total disruption of local markets by the introduction of motorized transport, wreaked havoc on the local economy and created spiraling inflation and food shortages.

In response to Tibetan complaints, the Chinese began to reassess their policy in Tibet. In 1956, Gen. Zhang Guohua, PLA commander in Tibet, admitted at the 8th party congress that government officials had caused Tibetan suffering by failing to control prices, and had failed to train a sufficient number of Tibetan cadres rapidly enough. As a result, during the spring and summer of 1957, the Chinese announced that no new reforms would be introduced in Tibet for at least six years, that henceforth all affairs of a local nature would be handled by Tibetan cadres, and that additional cadres who had been brought in to administer the programs now being delayed would be withdrawn.

(LOU) Precursors of Open Rebellion--Trouble in Kham and Amdo

In 1952-53, Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres in Amdo and Kham began to implement land reform, stimulate class struggle against the nobility and big landholders, break up the landholdings of the major monasteries, and defrock some of the large number of monks. Chinese troops and police officials also tried to round up deserters from the KMT army and their local supporters, and to disarm the civilian populace. These measures understandably were extremely unpopular with the fiercely independent Amdowas and Khampas.

Friction between Han and Tibetans in Amdo and Kham began with the introduction of PLA troops in 1950 and broke out periodically in the form of armed clashes and intermittent guerrilla warfare. Following the introduction of land reform and class struggle in 1953, as many as 80,000 armed rebels--reportedly including 12,000 former KMT troops--fought with the PLA's 18th army. A Khampa from Lithang, Gampo Tashi Andrugtsang, took charge of a new coalition of Khampa clans--the so-called Chushi Gangdruk, or "Four Rivers, Six Ranges," a traditional name for the Amdo and Kham regions. While Andrugtsang took field command, Gyalo Thondup, an older brother of the Dalai, sought outside assistance for the insurgents.

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Another major outbreak during the winter of 1955-56--the so-called Kanting Rebellion--again reportedly involved thousands of armed insurgents. Khampa irregulars were said to have overrun the cities of Lithang, Bathang, Kanze, and Chamdo in eastern Tibet. The situation turned increasingly bloody. The rebels murdered Han officials and civilians, fleeing to the hills when the PLA arrived. They often found refuge, medical aid, and food in local monasteries.

In 1956, Chinese plans to make an inventory of the contents of Lithang Monastery--one of the largest in Kham--led to a pitched battle. The siege, variously reported as lasting between 26 and 64 days, resulted in the monastery's destruction and the death of a number of people on both sides.

Outbreaks of violence, although apparently on a smaller scale, continued in Kham through 1957 and spread to Amdo (Qinghai) in 1958. Tens of thousands of PLA troops were deployed to break the back of the rebellion. As a result, the rebels were slowly forced farther and farther west, into Central Tibet. By 1958, as many as 10,000-15,000 refugees from eastern Tibet were said to be living in tents in and around Lhasa, spreading stories of Han depredations and heroic Tibetan resistance, and straining local resources to the breaking point.

In response to the crisis presented by the growing refugee community, Chinese officials in 1958 began to sweep through the Khampa encampments, inspecting the inhabitants' documents. Those without a proper identity card were to be deported to Kham, presumably for investigation into their involvement in resistance activities. Alarmed, the refugees fled farther south and began to organize themselves for systematic resistance. Simmering discontent among Tibetans in Central Tibet provided tinder, needing only a spark to burst into flame.

(LOU) The 1959 Rebellion

An invitation to the Dalai Lama by the PLA commander in Lhasa provided the spark. The commander had been trying for some time to arrange a visit by the Dalai to a theatrical show to be put on by his troops, part of the Chinese effort to show that good relations existed between Han and Tibetans. After some 10 days of intense discussions, both sides apparently agreed to March 10, a date reportedly first proposed by the Dalai.

With the situation in the Lhasa area extremely tense, the PLA commander asked the Dalai and his civilian entourage to come without military escort. He probably hoped to avoid

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inflaming local passions by the spectacle of a body of armed Tibetans converging on PLA headquarters, a scene that could have been misinterpreted as a signal to rise up against the PLA. But Tibetan suspicions were aroused, the more so because March 10 coincided with the Great Prayer Festival, a major holiday.

Word spread quickly. Fearing that the Chinese intended to kidnap the Dalai, some 10,000-30,000 Tibetans gathered around his palace on March 10 to prevent the Chinese from seizing him. Reportedly the crowd contained most of the Tibetan army--a few thousand men--which still had not been fully integrated into the PLA. The crowd stoned to death a Tibetan official they believed to be a Chinese collaborator. In an ugly mood, the Tibetans remained encamped for 10 days.

Exactly how the ensuing violence started is a matter of dispute. Tibetans claim that on March 17 the PLA began shelling the Norbulingka palace, where the Dalai was staying, but they admit that only two shells fell in the compound. Such a desultory barrage would have served as a PLA warning, at best. According to another account, hardliners within the Tibetan resistance movement were responsible for the shelling, hoping to force the Dalai to come down forcefully on their side. Whoever fired the two salvos, the result was that the Dalai's advisers were alarmed. The Dalai fled during the night of March 17, disguised as a simple monk. On March 20, the PLA moved in and, after three days of fighting, dispersed the crowd, taking more than 4,000 prisoners.

As the Dalai fled toward India, the Chinese declared martial law on March 23 and abolished the Tibet local government on March 28. The Dalai arrived in India on March 31, accompanied by a number of government officials, family members, and other Tibetans. Fighting in Tibet continued sporadically, but within months had been largely suppressed. Insurgency supported by the exile communities in India and Nepal occurred intermittently at least through the mid-1970s.

(LOU) Incorporation and Integration, 1959-65

Between 1959 and 1965, Tibet was under a type of martial law. Local PLA administrative committees were in control throughout most of Tibet, with the exception of the Xigatse area which was under the control of the Panchen Lama's regional government. The authorities undertook extensive investigation of everyone thought to have been connected to the rebellion, and reportedly jailed or sentenced to labor reform thousands who had been involved.

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With the conservative monastic forces in the Dalai's entourage now either out of the country or removed from office, the Chinese announced that peaceful means would be used to implement "democratic reforms" earlier introduced in the rest of China. The government began to expropriate the landholdings of those officials and nobles who had supported the rebellion, and to buy out the holdings of many others. "Struggle sessions" were held against some landlords, and their possessions were redistributed.

The government also began to insist that monks earn a living from their own labor, a measure that resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of resident monks in such major monasteries as Drepung, Sera, and Ganden. Although Tibetans were allowed to continue to worship at temples and monasteries, the government began to impose restrictions on the performance of some traditional rites, on religious education, and on the induction of new monks. Political education was stepped up, not only in schools but also through the introduction of street committees and study groups similar to those extant elsewhere in China.

As these "democratic reforms" were being introduced, the government intensified efforts aimed at economic development. New areas were brought into cultivation, new seeds and techniques were introduced, more fertilizer was made available, reservoirs and canals were built, and new pastoral techniques were popularized. New light industrial factories, hydropower stations, roads, and other projects were built. Jobs were created, but some Tibetans complained that the Chinese demanded much harder physical labor than Tibetans were accustomed to and supplied insufficient rations. Harvests increased dramatically and cash incomes rose, but the influx of PLA troops and Han administrators, added to the increasing population, resulted in continued food shortages.

In 1965, Tibet was formally incorporated into China as an "autonomous region" with its own people's congress, regional government, and people's political consultative conference. This was to have heralded the beginning of a more thorough integration of Tibet's society and economy into the rest of China. Progress was cut short in late 1966, however, when the Cultural Revolution broke out.

(LOU) The Dark Years, 1966-76

The Chinese now admit that repression and discrimination were widespread during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Young Han "Red Guards" travelled to Tibet and began a reign of terror,

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destroying thousands of monasteries and shrines, defrocking thousands of monks and nuns, and looting or destroying cultural treasures. Many Tibetan youths joined in the destruction.

Han administrators--themselves under severe attack--were powerless to stop Red Guard rampages. During the height of the Cultural Revolution, the military may have been an active supporter and participant in anti-Tibetan depredations. During the late-1960s, as the Cultural Revolution wound down, the military again imposed martial law, a situation that persisted until about 1980.

(C) The New Policy of Liberalization

In May 1980, CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Vice Premier Wan Li travelled to Tibet to announce a new, liberalized policy for the region. The unpopular Han military commander in Tibet was transferred, new party chiefs were appointed--the current one is neither an ethnic Chinese nor a Tibetan, but comes from the Yi minority, virtually indistinguishable from Tibetans--and Tibetans were promoted in increasing numbers to fill administrative and political posts.

But despite some progress, Han still hold most positions of authority. Although representing only about 3 percent of the population in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Han hold about 40 percent of all government jobs; only one out of 15 PLA officers stationed in Tibet is Tibetan. Forty percent of all TAR department heads are Han, as are 38 percent of college students in Tibet. By contrast, 94 percent of elementary students are Tibetan. More than half the faculty of Tibet University are ethnic Chinese. Six out of every 10 factory managers in Tibet are said to be Han.

Under the post-1980 liberalization, many irrational economic policies were abandoned: Tibetans were encouraged to return to traditional animal husbandry and barley farming and to engage in trade, formerly the lifeblood of Tibet's economy. Border trade with Nepal was resumed, Tibet was allowed to keep all of the foreign exchange it could earn, and earlier this year a foundation was established to seek foreign investment for Tibet. Beijing has provided massive subsidies to sustain and develop Tibet's economy--amounting to as much as 7.5 billion yuan since 1952--and has relaxed cultural and religious policy and begun to rebuild many temples and shrines destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.

Despite the more liberal policies of the post-Mao era, Tibetans remain profoundly unconvinced of any historical or

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national bond with the Han, resentful of Han dominance and the continued large PLA presence, and bitter about the past. Religious freedom is still limited; e.g., the government imposes limits on the number of monks permitted in each monastery. Unrest has broken out periodically, although not as violently as during the September-October 1987 incidents. In 1980, for example, two fact-finding missions by supporters of the Dalai Lama were cut short following a demonstration of support for the Dalai and Tibetan independence involving about 2,000 people in Lhasa.

The 1987 Disturbances--What Happened?

(C) September 27

On September 27, 1987, apparently after several days of discussion and planning, about two dozen young monks from the Drepung Monastery outside Lhasa conducted a three-block protest march from the Jokhang Temple in downtown Lhasa to the compound of the TAR government. (See map, p. 19.) Ostensibly a protest against the execution of two Tibetan criminals several days before, the march was also avowedly held to support the Dalai Lama's calls for Tibetan independence during a September 21 speech to members of the Human Rights Caucus of the US Congress.

The police reacted quickly, using heavyhanded force, according to eyewitnesses. Driving their motorcycles into the crowd and beating some of the protesting monks, the police arrested 21 demonstrators and briefly detained several foreigners, including at least one American.

(C) October 1

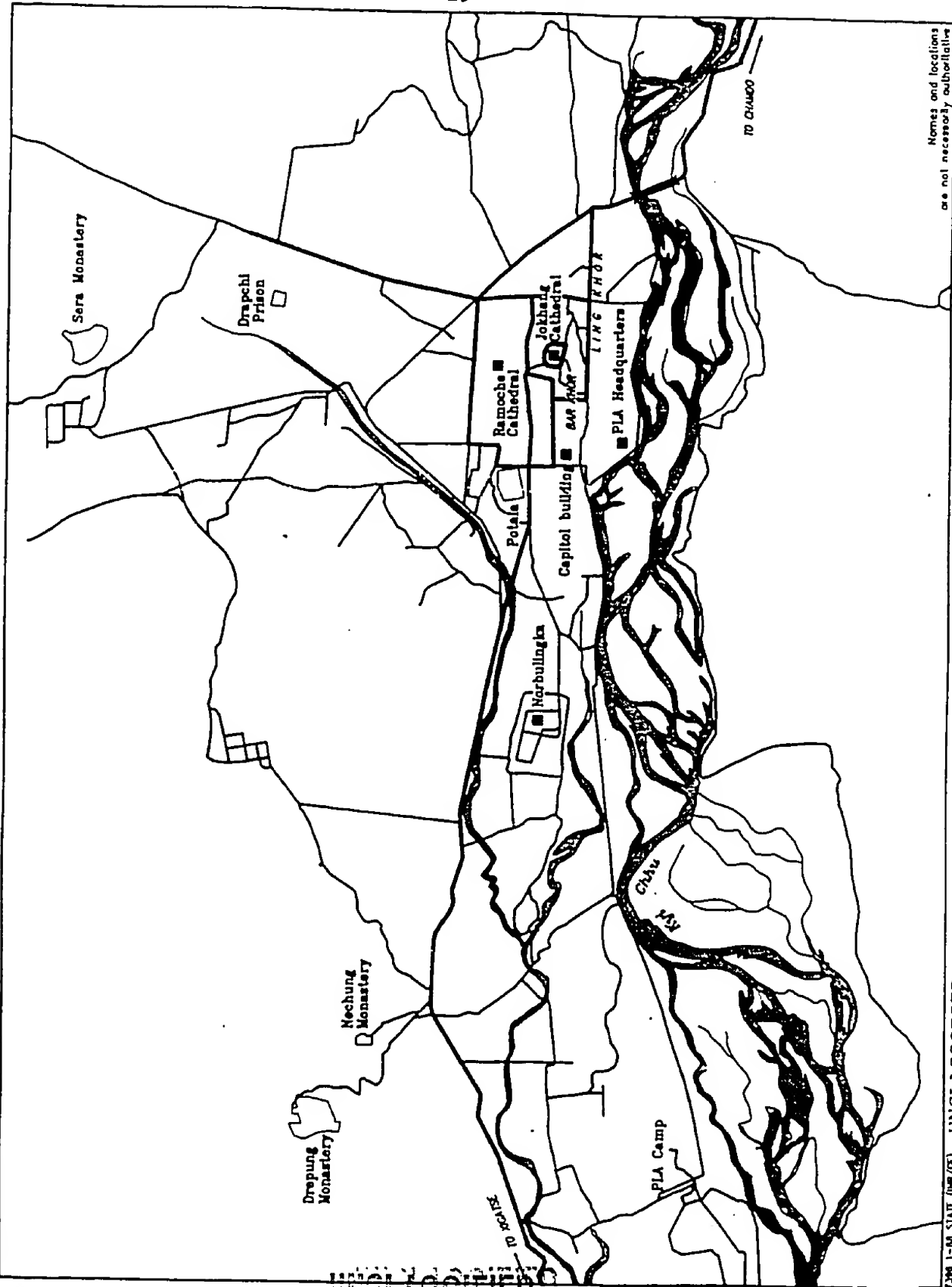
Angered by the strong police response and the arrest of the young protesters, monks at other monasteries in and around Lhasa decided to stage a second protest. At about 10:00 a.m. on October 1, 20-30 monks--mostly from Sera and Drepung monasteries--and an equal number of laymen began to march around the Jokhang, chanting independence slogans, waving the Tibetan flag, and carrying pictures of the Dalai. The police moved jeeps into the street to block the marchers and began to arrest them.

In response to police efforts to arrest the protesters, onlookers reportedly began to throw stones. By 10:30 a.m., the crowd had swelled to more than 1,000, and a number of soldiers, police officers, and Chinese newsmen had been injured. Security officials retreated into the police station while the crowd set fire to several police vehicles.

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By 11:30 a.m., the demonstration had turned into a riot. The police station was set on fire, and a fire truck attempting to put out the blaze was blocked by the stone-throwing crowd. Around noon, several monks escaped from the burning police station; one reported that the police had shot and killed two of their prisoners. Shortly after noon, armed police opened fire from adjacent rooftops.

Eyewitness reports suggest that the police exercised restraint in their use of force, reacting passively when the crowd began to throw stones and resorting to firearms only after the riot had gone on for two hours and the police station had been set afire with both prisoners and police personnel inside. No eyewitness has substantiated the Chinese claim that Tibetans had or used firearms during the demonstration. Reports of casualties vary, but seem to support the conclusion of police restraint: The protesters apparently suffered a relatively low casualty rate despite the large number of armed police and the density of the crowd. Between 6 and 20, including several police, apparently died from all causes, and a total of about 80 were injured. By 1:00 p.m., a tense standoff had been achieved, and by late afternoon Lhasa was quiet.

(C) October 6

A third protest took place on October 6, when about 80 Drepung monks marched on government headquarters to protest the continued detention of the 21 monks arrested September 27. Police forcibly broke up the demonstration and reportedly detained 80-100 protesters, but later released them.

The Aftermath

(S) Lhasa has remained tense since the September-October demonstrations.

Other smaller scale protests apparently have occurred--including one during the week of September 29 by monks at the Ganden Monastery, atop a 14,000-foot mountain 40 miles outside Lhasa--but large demonstrations and violence seem to have been headed off by cooler heads within the monasteries and intense pressure from local government and police officials. Since early October, police have maintained an armed presence in most major monasteries and have conducted lengthy mandatory propaganda sessions for their inhabitants. Police and PLA troops have made regular and conspicuous shows of force throughout Lhasa.

(C) Nine of the 21 Drepung monks arrested in the original September 27 demonstration were released on October 28. All made public confessions, acknowledging their "mistakes,"

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reportedly a condition of their release. [

(C) As of mid-November, a total of 21 monks arrested during the September 27 or October 1 demonstrations remained under arrest, including 13 from Drepung, 5 from Sera, and 3 from the Jokhang temple. All foreigners detained during the protests were released. Several were told to leave the country, and all foreign journalists were expelled on October 8. In mid-October, travel and tourism officials announced that only tour groups with previously signed contracts would be allowed to visit Tibet "for the time being"; and China's civilian air carrier CAAC refused to sell tickets from either Chengdu or Kathmandu, the two ports of civilian air entry. Southwest Airline reportedly again began to sell tickets to Lhasa to individual travellers in late November, but the China International Travel Service had not resumed regular tourist service to Tibet.

The 1987 Disturbances--Why They Happened

(S/NF) A number of causes lie behind the outbreak of disturbances in Tibet in September-October 1987. They include the clash between Han and Tibetan cultures under way since 1950, along with smoldering animosity as a result of the checked legacy of Han involvement in Tibet; rising expectations in Tibet as Beijing's efforts to modernize the region began to bear fruit; fear among traditionalists that Beijing's very success amplified the threat to Tibetan culture; a year-long effort by the exiles to raise international awareness of the Tibetan cause and a perception of growing support in the US Congress; the Dalai's call for independence before members of Congress; [

] and such shorter term causes as police overreaction and insensitivity.

(C) Success Breeds Its Own Tensions

Conflicting Goals. Paradoxically, one reason why unrest broke out in Tibet in 1987 may be that Chinese policy since 1980 has begun to achieve results. The Chinese seek to "modernize" Tibet's economy, polity, and society, but in accord with their own desires: to raise the living standards and "cultural level" of the Tibetans and make greater use of the region's abundant but untapped natural resources needed by the Chinese interior.

Moreover, Tibet is a strategic buffer between China and India and an important link in defense against the Soviet Union; Beijing believes it must maintain stability, especially so in light of recent heightened border tension with India.

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Beijing's wishes for Tibet--partly well motivated if paternalistic, partly chauvinistic and selfish--conflict with the desire of most Tibetans to "modernize" in their own way and have an important voice in their own future. The central government proudly announces statistics demonstrating rising living standards, increases in tourism, enhanced educational opportunities, and other "improvements." (See Appendix B.) They point to the many Han who have "volunteered" to go to Tibet to teach or help improve the economy and the thousands of Tibetan students sent to interior provinces for further education. Many Tibetans--especially the elderly and the exiles around the Dalai Lama--view these changes as indicators of the destruction of Tibetan culture.

In education, for example, Beijing cites a pre-1959 illiteracy rate of 95 percent--now reduced to 70-80 percent--and the existence of only 13 primary schools and one secondary school in Tibet. Now, they say, there are 2,388 primary schools and 64 high schools, and some 4,000 Tibetan students have been sent to study in the interior. Tibetans counter that the Chinese-built schools teach Chinese history and culture, in Chinese, and propagate communism while they denigrate religion. Moreover, Tibetan children sent to study in the interior often do not return, and those who do have been thoroughly Sinicized.

Beijing's encouragement of tourism provides another example of the clash of Chinese and Tibetan viewpoints. In the 1980-84 period, the number of tourists visiting Tibet climbed slowly from a few hundred to less than 2,000. Between 1984 and 1987, the number of foreign tourists travelling to Tibet jumped from 2,000 to 40,000, and Chinese plans call for expanding the number to 200,000 by the year 2000. The Chinese believe that foreign exchange earnings will help Tibet to modernize and that tourism will attract foreign investors. Many Tibetans resent being put on display, feel that the Chinese are preserving only the shell of their culture in order to earn hard currency, and believe the large investment in hotels and other tourist facilities would be better spent on infrastructure or productive construction.

Despite Beijing's more liberal policies, Tibet's economic problems remain intractable. In both 1984 and 1985, Tibet ranked last among the 29 provincial-level units in economic "growth," posting declines in gross value of industrial output in both years. In terms of average growth in the value of agricultural output between 1981 and 1986, Tibet also ranked last among the 29 provinces. During 1986, production may have picked up; an official statement said that gross value of industrial output had increased by more than 13 percent over 1985.

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Nevertheless, Tibet remains a major drain on the national treasury, with current annual subsidies of about 800 million yuan (\$267 million), a figure that Beijing has pledged to increase. Administrative expenses amount to more than half the value of industrial output, and three-fourths of the state subsidy to Tibet is used to purchase goods from outside the region. Indeed, 96 percent of the volume of retail goods sold in Tibet come from other provinces.

Even when Beijing is able to build industrial projects and create jobs, Tibetans claim that they are eligible only for the lowest paying manual labor while Hans receive all management and professional positions. Nevertheless, living standards appear to have improved somewhat under the post-1980 policies.

Rising Expectations in Tibet. Recent liberalization policies have aggravated tensions in Tibet in two ways. First, liberalization has fueled rising hopes--even expectations--that the central government will make more concessions. For example, Beijing's declared policy of allowing Hong Kong and Taiwan to maintain their current social, economic, and political systems after incorporation into the PRC has undoubtedly raised expectations that Tibet will receive equal treatment.

The fall of Hu Yaobang in January 1987 and the subsequent campaign against "bourgeois liberalization" probably played a role in fueling unrest in Tibet. Hu was widely believed to be the author of the more liberal policies in Tibet; the relaxation began with his 1980 trip, the first ever by a Communist Party chief. Party elders reportedly criticized Hu for going too far in liberalizing policy in Tibet and accused him of encouraging Tibetan separatists by stating that the Chinese should dramatically lower their profile in the region and allow the Tibetans to conduct their own affairs. These criticisms reportedly played a role in Hu's ouster.

The campaign against "bourgeois liberalization" resulted in an across-the-board, if temporary, retreat from more relaxed social and cultural policies in China. Fears that Beijing was backsliding from its commitment to the new policies probably also played a role in sparking the disturbances and were likely behind the April 6 comment by a Tibetan cadre that "At present, our workers are showing a misgiving [sic] about a possible change in policies." The combination of increasing frustration with the lack of economic progress, continued discrimination against Tibetans, and fears of a rollback of current policies probably lies behind the increasing radicalization of Tibetan youth noted by the Dalai in a November interview.

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Second, signs that Beijing's policy is slowly bringing Tibet closer to the path of Chinese-style modernization have aggravated tensions in a second way. For hardliners in the exile community, the "success" of reforms represents a bigger threat than past failures of Chinese policy. It was relatively easy to preserve anti-Chinese separatist sentiment when Tibetans were suffering under martial law or Cultural Revolution depredations.

With living standards improving somewhat, and religious and cultural policies at their most tolerant in almost 40 years, maintaining nationalistic fervor likely will become more difficult. At the same time, pressure within Tibet probably has grown for some kind of accommodation that would result in the return of the Dalai to his homeland. The confluence of the exiles' concern that Tibet's future might be slipping from their grasp, deep-seated antipathy toward the Han, and the frustration of rising expectations within Tibet provides the context for the current unrest.

External Factors

(C) Access. A number of external factors have encouraged activists in Tibet and exile leaders abroad to believe that now is the time to strengthen efforts for Tibetan independence. Access to Tibet has become far easier, especially via the well-travelled and relatively porous border with Nepal and through recently opened direct air links with Kathmandu. Moreover, the Chinese have encouraged Tibetans abroad to return home and examine the situation there for themselves. Thousands reportedly have done so, and several hundred have remained. Most have been unimpressed with material improvement in the region but struck by their compatriots' continued devotion to their religion and to the Dalai despite years of repression.

(S/NF) Some returning Tibetans apparently have been "separatists" and agents provocateurs: The Chinese have complained several times that saboteurs and agitators have been infiltrated from India and Nepal. [

(S/NF) In September 1986, a Chinese official complained to a foreign reporter that separatist agitators infiltrated into Tibet by the Dalai's forces had taken control of as many as 38 major temples and monasteries. [

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Although monks in Drepung, Sera, and other major monasteries steadfastly maintain that they acted on their own initiative, it seems almost certain that outside agitators were deeply involved in provoking unrest, if not in directly instigating the September 27 protest march. The Chinese have publicly, albeit obliquely, acknowledged that they have conclusive evidence of the involvement of the Dalai's entourage;

(C) Breakdown of Negotiations With the Dalai. Since 1979, China has allowed the Dalai Lama to send six investigative missions--including two of his brothers and his sister--to Tibet. They were enthusiastically received by the Tibetans. Apparently Tibetans at home and abroad--including the Dalai--began to believe that an eventual reconciliation might be possible. In 1983-84, it appeared that Beijing and the Dalai might come to an agreement by which the Dalai himself would return to China for a fact-finding visit. Some Chinese officials--including party chief Hu Yaobang--held out the hope that the Dalai could eventually settle in Tibet. The Dalai was quoted as saying, "I have faith in Hu Yaobang, and I hope I will see him some day."

(S/NF) These hopes were dashed in 1985; for unknown reasons apparently linked to internal politics both in Beijing and Dharmasala, the two sides hardened their positions. The internal dynamics of the Tibet issue in Beijing remain obscure, but

(C) In any event, in 1985 the Chinese refused to allow another delegation from the Dalai to go from Beijing to Xizang, on the thin pretext that the region was busy preparing for the 20th anniversary of its incorporation into China as an "autonomous region." The Dalai announced that although there had been some improvements in Tibet, they had not gone far enough and he had no intention of returning soon.

Negotiations had apparently reached their lowest point since 1979.

(C) Perception of Growing International Support. Tibetan independence advocates sensed, and have promoted, growing interest in Tibet and in their cause during the past year. A number

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of foreign journalists have visited Tibet and filed critical reports; prestigious Western newspapers have carried highly critical articles and letters by foreign supporters of the Dalai; and most recently, Tom Brokaw of NBC News filmed a highly controversial segment on Tibet as part of NBC's September-October 1987 week-long special from China. While in Tibet during September, Brokaw handed out pictures of the Dalai as the television crew filmed the reaction. Brokaw deleted these scenes from his telecast only after strenuous objections from Chinese authorities. Brokaw did include an interview with the Dalai--during NBC's last broadcast from China--although Beijing earlier in the week had threatened to cancel permission for his broadcasts if he showed the interview.

(C) Throughout 1987, supporters of the exile community had undertaken an intense "consciousness raising" effort in the US Congress and among other influential Americans sympathetic to the Tibetan cause as part of the runup to the Dalai's expected visit. A number of actions by the Congress likely further emboldened Tibetans--both in Tibet and among the exiles--to press their case. Several committees have held hearings on the state of human rights in Tibet; witnesses have generally been close to the Dalai's camp and highly critical of the PRC. Last May, a nonbinding resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives which condemned Chinese human rights abuses in Tibet and called on the administration to reassess policy toward the PRC--especially military sales--in light of the situation in Tibet. A less forceful version was passed in June. A similar resolution, known to be under discussion in the Senate all summer, was passed October 6.

(C) These statements and actions quickly became known in Tibet through foreign travellers and visiting overseas Tibetans. Their impact on the morale of the exile community is suggested by the September 16, 1987, letter of appreciation for the June (Mica) amendment sent to House Speaker Jim Wright, signed by 27 exile leaders in Nepal. Copies of the letter soliciting support for the exile cause were also sent to President Reagan and Vice President Bush.

(C) As the culmination of this "consciousness raising" effort, on September 21 the Dalai addressed members of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and presented a "five-point peace proposal" which included the removal of all Chinese troops from Tibet and negotiations between the PRC and representatives of the Tibetan people on the status and future of Tibet. Eight Congressmen followed the Dalai's address by sending a letter to Chinese Premier Zhao Ziyang endorsing the Dalai's proposal. These resolutions--and statements by Congressmen in support of Tibetan independence or the Dalai's "government-in-exile"--go against stated US policy accepting that Tibet is part of China.

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The Immediate Causes

(C) The Dalai's US Trip. The Dalai Lama's address to the Human Rights Caucus was one of several apparent triggers that set off the first demonstration on September 27. On September 24-25, two Tibetans were executed after a mass sentencing rally attended by some 15,000 residents of Lhasa. The Chinese have stated that those executed were common criminals, at least one a convicted murderer. Tibetan exiles have claimed that they were independence activists killed for their political beliefs. One member of the US Congress claimed that the executions were in response to the Dalai's statement before the Congressional Human Rights Caucus.

(C) The Chinese were incensed. Even Tibetan demonstrators made no such claim, nor did activist monks in private conversations with US Embassy officers. It was generally conceded in Tibet that those executed were common criminals. Similar accusations had surfaced in 1983, when Beijing acknowledged that 11 Tibetans were executed but averred that they were convicted of rape, looting, and murder. Several executions also took place in Tibet in September 1986. Executions are a regular part of China's semiannual crackdown throughout the country, as security forces seek to assure social stability before National Day (October 1) and the spring festival.

(C) Prophecies. Confidence in the cause of Tibetan independence reportedly also was strengthened by prophecies from an aged oracle who reported signs that the Dalai would return during the "year of the dragon," which begins in a few months. Moreover, an elderly monk told a foreign reporter that he and his fellow monastics knew from supernatural portents that the time had come to rise up. The appearance of an unusual rainbow over the Drepung Monastery on September 25 was followed by a series of three earthquakes the next morning, a sure sign that the Chinese era in Tibet was drawing to a close. More mundane causes lie at the heart of the 1987 disturbances, but one cannot discount the possibility that the timing of the demonstrations was triggered by such events.

(S/NF) PLA Buildup Not a Factor. The Chinese troop buildup along the Tibetan-Indian border during a period of escalating tensions does not appear to have been a factor. The number of additional troops was relatively small, they were mostly located in more remote areas, and initial violence in Lhasa appeared to eyewitnesses to be aimed at police forces even though unarmed PLA soldiers were standing by observing.

(C) India Not Involved. India's relatively cooperative attitude throughout the disturbances--including the Indian Government's request to the Dalai to refrain from making political

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statements and its crackdown on Tibetan demonstrators in India--suggests it did not wish further to exacerbate border tension--and Chinese suspicion--at a time when both sides were looking for a way to reduce bilateral friction. Some have speculated that India may have put some sort of pressure on the Dalai--to reduce his activities in India, to make an accommodation with or visit to the PRC, or even to leave India--and that this might have caused the exile community to act when it did.

What Next for Tibet?

Carrot and Stick

(C) Chinese security forces appear to have reestablished order in Tibet since early October, although tensions continue just below the surface. Police have searched monasteries looking for suspects and arrested ringleaders and those who engaged in violence. A number of monks reportedly remain under arrest, although others were released after a brief detention. Beijing knows that cracking down on those who participated in the demonstrations will increase Tibetan-Chinese friction, at least temporarily further alienate the exile community and the Dalai, and possibly draw international criticism, but it is prepared both to tighten security to prevent future incidents and to impose some restrictions on foreign access.

(C) Some of those arrested will be sentenced to long prison terms or work camps, and surveillance of monasteries and infiltration of informers will continue. But even if monks are convicted of killing policemen, they may not receive the death penalty; the authorities likely will try to avoid the risk of again heating tensions to the boiling point or exacerbating international censure. Most of those detained probably will be released after a period of "education," but will be kept under surveillance.

(S/NF) Beijing will likely also begin a thorough reexamination of the reliability of Tibetan party members, government officials, and members of the security forces in a search for those who sympathized or sided with the protesters or were negligent in performing their duties during the demonstrations.

(C) Chinese officials involved may also be caught in the backlash. Lhasa police officials may be punished for failing to foresee the flareup, for losing control of the situation,

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and because their troops violated standing orders by firing on the crowd. Some of their superiors in Beijing may also receive partial blame. Local party officials--especially propagandists, united front workers, and intelligence cadres--will be censured for their poor performance. Regional party secretary Wu Jinghua was reelected to the Central Committee at the early November 1987 13th party congress and does not appear to be in jeopardy.

(C) Over the longer term, the incident should confirm to Beijing the importance of its policy of liberalization and development. A violent 1981 flareup in Xinjiang was followed by a robust and methodical crackdown, but did not affect longer term economic and political liberalization; the same pattern will likely obtain in Tibet.

(C) Tightening Up Access

China tightened border control and visa issuance to detect and prevent infiltration of Dalai partisans from India and Nepal, steps it probably will continue for a while. Tourist officials imposed a "temporary" ban in Tibet on individual tourists--but not on official visitors or approved tour groups. Visa issuance for individual travellers will likely be subject to greater scrutiny. Charging that foreigners supported and participated in recent unrest, Beijing expelled two Americans and several Europeans. At least temporarily, Beijing will probably enforce a requirement that foreign journalists seek permission 10 days in advance for travel to Tibet.

(C) Bilateral Impact

Chinese officials, including President Li Xiannian, have differentiated between the US Government's official position on Tibet and the "interference" of a "small group" in Congress, a suggestion that Beijing does not want a spat with the US. Each critical statement by a Congressman and each Congressional resolution is met by a PRC rebuttal, apparently increasing frustration. Relations with India--which has taken a conciliatory stance, perhaps hoping to ease recent strains--and Nepal, where for a decade the King has attempted to exercise tight supervision and control over the large Tibetan exile community, do not appear to have been affected.

Long-Term Implications

(C) Both sides may have learned a lesson that could lead to further talks--even some accommodation--between the Dalai and the PRC. Beijing now realizes that, despite its more liberal policies, Chinese rule is intensely unpopular and support for the Dalai runs deep. Hardliners around the Dalai have

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tested the waters and found that confrontation still meets with repression at home but gains little sustained support abroad.

(S/NF) Public statements by the Dalai and private assurances by top Chinese officials.

that both sides want to resume dialogue as soon as possible. suggest
Commenting on the results of the 13th party congress, the Dalai
on November 10 said he had "more hope" in China's new, younger
leaders. [

he planned to conduct a survey of Tibetan exiles to gauge support for an accommodation with Beijing that would be short of full independence. / The Dalai also stated that

(S/NF) Providing further encouragement, a private letter from Deng to the Dalai after the demonstrations reportedly reiterated that all issues are open to discussion except Tibetan independence.

Prepared by Christopher M. Clarke
647-1343

Approved by Richard A. Clarke
647-2402

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(S/NF) Appendix A

"Facts and Figures" on Tibet: Some Observations

(C) Both Beijing and supporters of the Dalai Lama's "government in exile" publish "statistics" to support their respective positions on the situation in Tibet. The virtual absence of objective, competent observers and the enormous discrepancy between the two sides' statements make independent assessments extremely difficult. The problem is complicated by unclear definitions and timeframes.

(C) Some available and apparently objective figures cast considerable doubt on the exiles' more extreme claims. For example, the exiles speak of "the 6 million Tibetan people"--some even refer to 7 million Tibetans--and claim that more than 1 million Tibetans were killed or died as a result of the Chinese occupation. They further allege that 7.5 million Chinese have immigrated into Tibet, that Chinese authorities operate 80 prisons in Tibet, and that more than 100,000 Tibetans are in prison or undergoing labor reform.

(C) Counting Tibetans

Exile claims of 6-7 million Tibetans are very difficult to reconcile with existing data. According to China's 1982 census--performed under UN auspices and supervision and believed by the US Census Bureau to be reliable within a reasonable margin of statistical error--the PRC contained 3.82 million ethnic Tibetans, of whom about half (1.8 million) lived in the Tibet Autonomous Region and half elsewhere. As of 1986, Chinese figures claim about 4 million Tibetans, with almost 2 million of them living in the TAR. Tibetan exiles in India are believed to number around 100,000, with only a few thousand living in the US or Europe. Unless the exiles are claiming ethnic Tibetans in Nepal, Sikkhim, and Bhutan as part of the 6 million--and they do not appear to claim these territories as part of "greater Tibet"--their claim to a population of 6-7 million seems considerably inflated.

(C) Tibetan Casualties

Tibetan exiles claim that as many as 1.2 million Tibetans died as a result of Chinese invasion or persecution. This seems implausible. According to Chinese figures--which are reasonably consistent from the 1950s through the present--there were 1.274 million Tibetans in the TAR in 1953. The total dropped to 1.251 million in the 1964 census, a reduction of 23,000, or about 2 percent. Had the population of Tibet grown

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at a 2-percent annual rate between 1953 and 1964--a reasonable estimate of expectable growth--the total population would have reached about 1.58 million. Thus, between 1953 and 1964, the difference between expectable and actual population "growth" was a decrease on the order of 330,000.

Of this total, perhaps 100,000 fled to India as a result of the failed 1959 rebellion. Judging from extremely fragmentary data, several tens of thousands may have been killed in the fighting. In Tibet as elsewhere in the PRC, the Great Leap Forward resulted in a significant number of deaths from starvation and privation. But the death of 1 million Tibetans--impossible to cover up, either physically or statistically--seems extremely unlikely. Similarly, recent exile claims that 400 Tibetans in eastern Tibet (presumably Kham) were killed after the September-October demonstrations are unverifiable.

Chinese Influx

(C) One of the exiles' apparently most inflated claims is that 7.5 million Han Chinese have immigrated into "Tibet" and that even in the TAR, the Han outnumber the Tibetans at 2 million vs. 1.9 million, respectively. Chinese figures are consistent in showing fewer than 100,000 Han in the TAR: The 1964 census counted 36,690 and the 1982 census 91,720; the Chinese currently claim that only 73,000 Han remain in Tibet. According to these figures, Han account for only 3-5 percent of the TAR's total population.

(S/NF) These figures, of course, do not include military forces. [

] If these figures are accurate, Han overall probably account for about 10 percent of the TAR's population.

(LOU) Figures from the 1982 census suggest that the total number of Han in "greater Tibet" is about 4 million out of a total population of 7.6 million. In the two Tibetan autonomous prefectures of Sichuan, Han made up only 38 percent of total population; in Gansu's Tibetan autonomous prefecture, 42 percent; in Qinghai, 80 percent. Figures for Yunnan were not available. Thus, according to figures from the UN-supervised census, Han neither number 7.5 million in Tibet nor outnumber Tibetans, except in Qinghai.

(S) [

Han in the TAR, including PLA troops, are estimated at 175,000.

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Han estimates for other areas in the greater Tibetan cultural zone include: 2,220,000 in Qinghai, more than 300,000 in Sichuan, 43,000 in Gansu, and less than 750,000 in Yunnan. Thus, Han in "greater Tibet" number not more than 3.5 million, according to these estimates.

(S) Tibetans, according to Embassy Beijing's estimates, number about 4.02 million, broken down as follows: TAR, 1.9 million; Qinghai, 810,000; Sichuan, 922,000; Gansu, 320,000; and Yunnan, 96,000.

(LOU) Longer term trends support the above analysis, although available figures do not permit a breakdown by prefecture. According to a comparison of the 1964 Chinese census with the 1982 census, Tibetans as a percentage of total population in the TAR, Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai have not changed significantly. In 1982, Tibetans accounted for 0.9 percent of Sichuan's population, 0.3 percent of Yunnan's, 1.6 percent of Gansu's, and 19.4 percent of Qinghai's. In 1964, comparable figures were 0.9 percent in Sichuan and 19.7 percent in Qinghai, suggesting that no massive influx of Han into Qinghai took place, at least between 1964 and 1982. Figures for Yunnan and Gansu were not available. Tibetans represented 96.7 percent of the population of the TAR in 1964 and 94.4 percent in 1982.

(C) Prisons

According to John F. Avedon, one of the most vocal and articulate proponents of the exiles' cause, the TAR contains "75 district and five divisional prisons" housing 10,000-20,000 Tibetan inmates. Of the total, Avedon says, 3,000-4,000 are political prisoners. In addition, he asserts, some 100,000 Tibetans are undergoing forced reform-through-labor, and Qinghai (Amdo) has been converted into the "planet's largest gulag." Qinghai houses "millions of Chinese" prisoners and "many" incarcerated Tibetans and is capable of holding as many as 10 million prisoners.

The Chinese counter that Tibet contains not 80 prisons but one prison and one work camp with fewer than 1,000 inmates. Of the 1,000, 28 have been convicted of "counterrevolutionary" offenses.

Beijing's figures on the number of prisoners in Tibet seem implausibly low and Avedon's implausibly high, but the problem may be partly one of definition. The TAR contains only 77 counties and one city; 11 of the counties contained fewer than 10,000 persons and another 18 had populations of 10,000-20,000, according to the 1982 census. It seems unlikely that any of these 28 counties had a "prison"--although they may have

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contained a local lockup for minor offenders--or that a total of 80 prisons were distributed among the other 49 counties. This contention seems supported by Avedon's own research: He refers to two large prisons in Lhasa, each housing 1,500-2,000 prisoners, and states that Tibet's "five divisional prisons" each have a capacity of around 200. As these five clearly would be the largest prisons in Tibet, most of the others must be much smaller.

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(LOU) Appendix B

Selected Chinese Statistics on Tibet

A. Population

Table 1. Population Census Data on Han and Tibetans
(million/percent)

<u>1964</u>						
<u>Province</u>	<u>Population</u>			<u>Share</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>	<u>Han</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>	<u>Han</u>
China	723.1	2.5	651.3	100	0.3	90.1
Tibet	1.3	1.258	0.037	100	96.7	0.5
Sichuan	68.0	0.605	66.2	100	0.9	97.4
Yunnan	20.5	n.a.	14.0	100	n.a.	68.4
Gansu	12.6	n.a.	n.a.	100	n.a.	n.a.
Qinghai	2.1	0.423	1.3	100	19.7	61.3

<u>1982</u>						
<u>Province</u>	<u>Population</u>			<u>Share</u>		
	<u>Total</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>	<u>Han</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Tibetan</u>	<u>Han</u>
China	1,003.9	3.869	936.7	100	0.4	93.3
Tibet	1.9	1.786	0.092	100	94.4	4.8
Sichuan	99.7	0.922	96.1	100	0.9	96.3
Yunnan	32.6	0.096	22.2	100	0.3	68.3
Gansu	19.6	0.304	18.0	100	1.6	92.1
Qinghai	3.9	0.754	2.4	100	19.4	60.6

Source: US Census Bureau, based on data from Chinese 1964 and 1982 censuses.

n.a. = not available

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Table 2. Population of the Tibet Autonomous Region,
1952-85
(million)

1952	1.1300	1971	1.5538
		1972	1.5928
1958	1.2062	1973	1.6292
1959	1.2280	1974	1.6612
1960	1.2698	1975	1.6911
1961	1.2987	1976	1.7240
1962	1.3017	1977	1.7582
1963	1.3238	1978	1.7876
1964	1.3467	1979	1.829
1965	1.3712	1980	1.8527
1966	1.3967	1981	1.859
1967	1.4211	1982	1.8923
1968	1.4516	1983	1.9314
1969	1.4805	1984	1.9888
1970	1.5120	1985	1.99

Source: US Census Bureau; Statistical Yearbook of China, 1986.

Estimated historical population of Tibet

7th century - 4.62 million
13th century - 560,000
18th century - 940,000

Source: "Some Basic Facts About Tibet." Handout from PRC
Embassy, Washington, DC, September 1987.

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B. Production, Investment, and Consumption

1. Total social product (1984)	1.751 million yuan
of which:	
agriculture	0.792
industry	0.193
construction	0.479
transportation	0.105
commerce	1.410
2. Total consumption (1984)	0.963 million yuan
of which:	
personal consumption	0.699
public consumption	0.264
3. Total accumulation (1984)	0.311 million yuan
of which:	
fixed assets	0.275
circulating funds	0.036
4. Total investment in fixed assets (1985)	0.709 million yuan
of which:	
state-owned enterprises	0.637
collective enterprises	0.007
individuals	0.065
5. Investment in capital construction (1985)	0.584 million yuan
of which:	
agriculture	0.011
industry	0.127
construction	0.005
transportation and communications	0.086
commerce	0.041
health and welfare	0.039
education and culture	0.079
6. Consumption levels (1985)	
PRC average	407 yuan
peasants	324
nonagricultural	754
Tibet	359
peasants	268
nonagricultural	971

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7. Average annual wages (1985)

PRC average	1,102 yuan
Tibet	1,967

8. Net per capita income of peasants (1985)

PRC average	397.6 yuan
Tibet	353.0

9. Per capita consumption by peasants (1985)

a. Grain

PRC average	259 kg
Tibet	200 kg

b. Meat

PRC average	10.97 kg
Tibet	15.59 kg

c. Cotton cloth

PRC average	2.54 m
Tibet	2.02 m

C. Industry

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Number of staff and workers (1985) | 21,000 |
| of which: state enterprises | 17,000 |
| 2. Gross value of industrial output (1985) | 149 million yuan |
| of which: | |
| state enterprises | 114 |
| light industry | 64 |
| heavy industry | 75 |

D. Agriculture

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| 1. Rural labor force (1985) | 878,000 |
| 2. Total rural product of society (1985) | 1.166 million yuan |
| of which: | |
| agriculture | 1.058 |
| rural industry | 0.012 |
| construction | 0.034 |
| transportation | 0.031 |
| commerce | 0.031 |

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3. Gross value of agricultural output (1985) 1.058 million yuan
of which:
crops 0.431
forestry 0.023
animal husbandry 0.491
sideline production 0.113
4. Grain output
1985 - 0.531 million metric tons
1986 - 0.450 million metric tons
5. Livestock (1985)
large animals - 5.4 million
sheep and goats - 16.3 million

E. Social, Cultural, and Educational

1. Education (1985)

<u>Schools</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>Enrollment</u>
higher education	3	567	1,370
specialized secondary	13	354	1,826
regular secondary	56	1,406	18,900
primary	2,475	8,118	125,400

2. Health (1985)

total number of health institutions	958
of which: "hospitals"	481
of which: at or above county level	95
beds	5,000
staff	8,000

Source for all above statistics: Statistical Yearbook of China, 1986.

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(C/NF) Appendix C

A Selected Chronology of Tibetan Events

Pre-1950

1935 - July 6	14th Dalai Lama born.
1938 -	10th Panchen Lama born.
1939 - mid-August	Dalai arrives in Lhasa.
1940 - February 22	14th Dalai Lama installed.

1950-1959

1950 - October 7	PLA moves into eastern Tibet (Kham).
- November 17	14th Dalai invested with supreme temporal power.
- December 19	Dalai flees to Yatung, on Indian border.
1951 - mid-April	Tibetan delegation travels to Beijing.
- May 23	17-point agreement signed in Beijing.
- July	Gen. Zhang Jingwu travels to Yatung to explain agreement to Dalai.
- August 17	Dalai returns to Lhasa.
- September 9	PLA troops peacefully enter Lhasa.
1952-53	CCP cadres begin land reform and class struggle in Amdo and Kham.
1953	Khampa begin guerrilla warfare against Han civilians and PLA.
1954 - April 29	Sino-Indian agreement on Tibet recognizes Chinese sovereignty but maintains Indian trading privileges.
- September	Dalai travels to Beijing to attend first session of National People's Congress.

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1955 - March 9 Establishment of Preparatory Committee for Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

- June Dalai returns to Lhasa.

1955-56 - winter Kanting Rebellion - rebels overrun several cities in eastern Tibet.

1956 - March-April Chinese attempt to inventory contents of monasteries in eastern Tibet, setting off open rebellion and leading to destruction of Lithang Monastery.

- November 26 Dalai travels to New Delhi for 2,500th anniversary celebration of Buddha's birth; Panchen Lama also attends.

1957-58 Chinese conduct extensive roadbuilding program throughout Tibet; violence continues in Kham and Amdo; Great Leap Forward.

1959 - March 10 Tibetans crowd around Norbulingka Palace after rumors spread that PLA intends to kidnap Dalai.

- March 17 Two artillery shells land in Norbulingka garden; Dalai flees to India by night.

- March 20 PLA disperse crowd around Norbulingka after three days of fighting.

- March 23 Chinese declare martial law in Tibet.

- March 28 Tibet local government disbanded.

- March 31 Dalai arrives in India.

1960s Tibet remains under virtual martial law; exiles continue intermittent cross-border incursions.

1961 Panchen writes 70,000-word criticism of PRC Tibet policy.

1962 - September Border war with India.

1964 - March Panchen declares loyalty to Dalai and Tibetan independence at public rally; is arrested.

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1966-68 Cultural Revolution; violence destroys numerous monasteries, terrorizes monks and officials.

1970s Tibet remains under virtual martial law; cross-border incursions continue.

1975 Han Suyin becomes first non-Chinese resident to visit Lhasa since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

1977 - June Xinhua quotes Ngapoi as welcoming the Dalai back if he will "stand on the side of the Tibetan people."

- October-
November George Bush, former US envoy to China, and other diplomats allowed to visit Tibet.

1979 Early in the year, proposed delegation of young Tibetan exiles falls through because PRC insists they declare themselves overseas Chinese.

1979 - August 2nd session of Tibet People's Congress elects Tian Bao as governor, Ngapoi as standing committee chairman. Both are ethnic Tibetans.

1979 - August-
December Five-member delegation--led by the head of Dalai's security office and including his younger brother, Lobsang Samten--travels in Tibet.

1980s

1980 - April CCP Secretariat undertakes study of Tibet policy, recommends new liberalized measures.

- May 22-
June 1 CCP General Secretary Hu Yaobang and Vice Premier Wan Li travel to Lhasa, announce new policies, admit past mistakes, and state that it will take 5-6 years to reachieve Tibet's highest economic level since 1950.

1980 - August Two delegations from the Dalai, including one led by his sister, visit Tibet; both are mobbed by supporters and the

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trips are cut short by the Chinese; both of the Dalai's older brothers--Thubten Norbu and Gyalo Thondup--make private visits.

- 1983 - March 25 New party committee for Tibet; Yin Fatang named first secretary; four of five secretaries and three of five deputy secretaries are Tibetans.
- April 30 Ngapoi elected chairman of TAR people's congress.
- 1984 - February Secretariat holds forum on Tibet policy.
- August 19-31 Secretariat member Hu Qili and Vice Premier Tian Jiyun visit Tibet, announce new economic aid measures.
- October 14 Dalai tells foreign journalist, "I have faith in Hu Yaobang, and I hope I will meet him one day."
- 1985 - June 8 Wu Jinghua (Yi nationality) appointed party secretary, calls for understanding Tibet "afresh."
- June-August Delegation on two-month fact-finding mission from Dalai refused entry to Tibet because of preparations for 20th anniversary celebration of founding of TAR.
- August 31 Hu Qili, Vice Premier Li Peng, Secretariat member Wang Zhaoguo, and PLA General Political Department Deputy Director Zhou Keyu in Tibet for celebration of 20th anniversary of founding of TAR.
- 1986 - January 3-25 Restoration of Tibetan "summons ceremony" or Great Prayer Festival, a major religious festival banned since the Cultural Revolution.
- September Religious Affairs Bureau tells Agence France Presse reporter that Dalai's forces have infiltrated lamas who have taken control of 38 major monasteries and temples.

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- 1987 - January 16 Hu Yaobang sacked as party chief.
- March 30 Wan Li affirms that liberal policies in Tibet will not change.
- April 6 Tibetan cadre warns that workers in Tibet fear rollback of liberal policies.
- April 15 Establishment of Tibet Development Aid Foundation.
- June 18 US House of Representatives approves amendment on human rights in Tibet.
- June 26-28 Former President Jimmy Carter visits Tibet; Xinhua reports Carter's remark applauding "religious freedom" in Tibet.
- July 17-19 FRG Chancellor Kohl makes first visit of sitting foreign head of state to Tibet.
- September 15 People's Daily publicizes State Council meeting on aid to Tibet.
- September 18-28 Dalai visits US, proposes "five-point peace plan" before members of US Congressional Human Rights Caucus.
- Chinese Embassy criticizes "some members of Congress" for "interference" in China's internal affairs.
- September 22 Eight congressmen send letter to Premier Zhao Ziyang supporting Dalai's plan.
- September 24-25 Two Tibetans executed in Lhasa.
- September 27 21 monks and a few laymen demonstrate in Lhasa and are arrested.

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- September 28 Two Americans detained for alleged involvement in demonstration.
- September 29 200 Tibetan exiles protest in New Delhi.
- September 30 Two members of US Congress hold press conference to protest human rights abuses in Tibet and release letter of protest to Zhao.

Justice Minister Zou Yu says all prisoners from the 1959 rebellion have been freed.

- late September-early October NBC in China for week-long broadcast; broadcasts prior interview with Dalai.
- October 1 Monks from Sera and Drepung protest in Lhasa; demonstration turns violent; bystanders join in; several killed and as many as 100 wounded.

- October 2 Lhasa placed under curfew.
- October 3 Lhasa city government restricts travel for Tibetans.

300 Tibetans demonstrate in New Delhi; several hundred protest in Bern, Switzerland.

Dalai in India appeals to human rights groups and foreign governments to put pressure on PRC.

in Beijing.

- October 5 Spokesman for CCP International Liaison Department charges that support of some foreigners for Tibetan independence is serious and wanton interference in China's internal affairs; China Daily blames Dalai for violence.

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State Department reiterates US Government position that Tibet is part of China.

Protests reported in Xigaze.

Monks from Sera, Drepung, and Ganden Monasteries appeal to UN for support.

- October 6 Dalai's spokesman says hundreds of Tibetans arrested after October 1 protest.

US Senate passes nonbinding resolution (98-0) on human rights abuses in Tibet.

About 90 monks are beaten and taken into custody in protest march; later released. Activists say two died of injuries received.

- October 7 Dalai says peaceful demonstrations will continue, affirms that he wants to continue dialogue with Beijing.

In New Delhi, police remove 8 Tibetans on hunger strike in front of Chinese Embassy; 50 protest in Ottawa.

Chinese Government lodges strong protest with US Government against Senate resolution.

- October 8 Chinese Government orders all foreign journalists out of Tibet within 48 hours, saying they violated rules requiring advance notice for travel.

China calls on India to prevent Dalai from making political statements.

- October 9 Exiles criticize Indian Government for lack of support.

Authorities in Tibet order all foreign travellers to leave Tibet within a week.

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- October 10 150 Tibetans protest in Paris outside Chinese Embassy.

Deadline for two Americans to leave under Chinese expulsion order.
- October 12 350 Tibetans protest in New Delhi.

Dalai issues statement denouncing expulsion of foreign journalists.
- October 13 Dalai gives interview in India, denies protests were planned but says "one factor" may have been his US trip.
- October 14 Travel of individual travellers to Tibet banned "for the time being."

US Congressional hearing on human rights in Tibet; Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Roy testifies.
- October 15 Date set by Chinese authorities for protest organizers and activists to surrender for lenient treatment; sweep of neighborhoods and monasteries begins.

1,200 Tibetan exiles protest in New Delhi.
- October 21 California Democratic Congressional Delegation holds news briefing, announces that a letter from 58 congressmen to President Reagan has been sent urging him to "encourage and facilitate a favorable resolution of the status of Tibet along the lines proposed by the Dalai Lama."
- October 28 13 Tibetans--including 9 of 21 monks arrested after September 27 demonstration--released after giving public confessions.
- October 31 One West German and two British teachers expelled from Tibet for running an illegal library and possessing banned literature.

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- November 2
- November 10 Dalai remarks in press conference that Tibetan youths are becoming increasingly radicalized; calls for referendum on accommodation with Beijing short of full independence.
- November 13 PRC President Li Xiannian, in Italy, blasts Dalai and US "interference."
- November 16 500 Tibetans protest in New Delhi.
- November 17 Rally on steps of US Capitol in support of Tibetan human rights and independence attracts a crowd of about 200.
- late November Confrontation between monks and authorities at Ganden Monastery outside Beijing.
- December 3 Congress attaches amendment on human rights violations in Tibet to State Department appropriations bill; Chinese press denounces the action.
- December 7 People's Daily commentary blasts US "interference" on Tibet.
- December 10 700 Tibetans demonstrate in New Delhi.

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(C) Appendix D

The 14th Dalai Lama

The Kumbum Monastery--built in the 16th century to commemorate the birthplace of Tsongkhapa, the founder of Tibet's largest Buddhist sect, the Gelugpa--is located about 15 miles south of Xining, now the capital of Qinghai. About two days' walk east of Kumbum is a small farming village called Takster. There on July 6, 1935, Lhamo Dhondrup was born, the fifth child of apparently at least seven in a family of moderate means.

The boy's oldest brother, Thubten Jigme Norbu--sometimes called Takster Rimpoche, or the Precious One of Takster--had been selected seven years earlier as an incarnation of the abbot of Kumbum. A few years later, another older brother was also selected as a high incarnated lama and installed at Kumbum.

Shortly after the death of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1933, delegations spread out through all of greater Tibet in search of the new Dalai. They arrived at the house of Lhamo Dhondrup, reportedly guided by divine portents and, after extensive examination, the young boy was acknowledged as the latest incarnation of Chenrezig (or Avalokitesvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion).

Setting out from Kumbum in mid-August 1939, the four-year-old Dalai-designate arrived outside Lhasa on October 6. Amid pomp and ceremony, he entered the city on October 8 and began seven weeks of indoctrination and induction into holy orders. On February 22, 1940, the new Dalai--not yet five years old--was installed on the Lion Throne of the Potala Palace in an elaborate ritual.

According to custom, the new Dalai was given a monastic name: Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso, or Holy Lord, Great Glory, Eloquent, Compassionate, Learned Defender of the Faith. Commonly called Tenzin Gyatso, the new chief priest of the Gelugpa ("Yellow Hat") sect was seldom referred to by Tibetans as the Dalai Lama, a term deriving from the Mongolian meaning "Ocean of Wisdom." Other common appellations include Gyalwa Rimpoche (Victorious Precious One) and Kyabngon Rimpoche (Precious Protector).

Surrounded by thousands of monks and the accumulated documents and treasures of centuries, the young Dalai was steeped in Tibetan language, philosophy, and religious discourse. Isolated from outside contacts, he was heavily influenced by

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the conservative regent, cabinet ministers, chief monks, and teachers. As an adolescent, however, he reveled in reading the 13th Dalai's collection of old National Geographic and Life magazines, driving around the palace gardens in one of Lhasa's few battered old automobiles, watching Western movies, and discussing the outside world with Heinrich Harrer, an Austrian who had escaped internment in British India during World War II.

Tibet was little affected by the war, but the world outside was changing rapidly and the Tibetan Government was incapable of adjusting. The Dalai, still a teenager, was forced to take a more and more direct interest in the conduct of Tibetan state affairs. On November 17, 1950--three years short of majority by Tibetan standards--Tenzin Gyatso was invested as supreme temporal ruler of Tibet in an effort to shore up lagging morale and stave off surrender to the PLA.

Aft : 1950, the Dalai showed maturity far beyond his years. Between the entry of the first Chinese troops into eastern Tibet in 1950 and the outbreak of open rebellion in 1959, he sought to play a moderating and conciliating role between the PRC Government and his own entourage. It was, as the Dalai himself later stated, like "standing between two volcanos." Ultimately, his mission failed, and he fled to India in late March 1959.

The Dalai has lived in India since 1959 and has travelled extensively in Europe and the US. Since 1979, he has consistently expressed interest in returning to Tibet--even if only for a visit--and has ranked the question of his own future role behind the wishes and interests of his people. The Dalai's public statements suggest he continues to play a moderating role between hardline advocates of total independence and no accommodation with Beijing and those who hope for a speedy settlement of outstanding issues. In November 1987--after the flareup of violent proindependence demonstrations in Lhasa--he announced that he would conduct a poll among Tibetan exiles to gauge support for means of accommodation with Beijing short of independence.

The Dalai has at least two living brothers and one sister. Another brother died in 1980. Gyalo Thondup, the elder brother, lives in India and has business interests in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

] Thubten Norbu, the Dalai's eldest brother, lives in the US and teaches college in Indiana. His younger sister is named Pemba Gyalpo.

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(C) Appendix E

The Panchen Lama

The Panchen Lama ("Great Scholar") is traditionally the second-ranking cleric in the Tibetan religious hierarchy. Considered the incarnation of Opame (Amitabha, or the Buddha of the Pure Land), the symbol of the meditative aspect of Buddhism, the Panchen belongs to the dominant Gelugpa sect and traditionally resides at the Tashilhumpo Monastery in Xigatse. The first universally recognized Panchen, Lobsang Gyaltsen, was the teacher of the Great Fifth Dalai (d. 1682). Since that time, the elder of the two lamas has generally been considered tutor to the younger, although the Dalai has always been temporally superior. Historically, the Chinese Government has periodically attempted to bolster the Panchen's prestige and use him as a counterweight to the Dalai, a tactic the CCP adopted between 1950 and 1959.

The current Panchen--officially Baingen Erdini Qoigyi Gyaincain--is one of the few Tibetan religious figures with some influence in both Beijing and Lhasa. He is relatively well respected by moderate elements in Tibet for maintaining pressure for improvements in Tibet, fighting for the preservation and development of Tibetan religion and culture, and periodically making a stand with the Beijing leadership. But he also publicly supports the official Chinese policy line on Tibet--including denouncing the idea of Tibetan independence.

Unlike the Dalai, the Panchen fell under Chinese influence early and has spent almost his entire career attempting to steer between his feelings for his homeland and his recognition of political reality. His predecessor, the ninth Panchen, collaborated with the invading Chinese imperial army in 1910 and ultimately fled to Beijing, never to return to Tibet. When he died in 1937, the Kuomintang-ruled government heavily influenced the choice of his successor.

Goinbo Cedan, the current Panchen, was born in 1938 in Xunhua county, Qinghai, not far from the birthplace of the current Dalai. He was chosen in 1941 from a peasant family as one of three candidates for final examination to determine the rightful reincarnation of the late Panchen. Kept under the control of the local warlord, Ma Bufang, the young boy never made the trip to Tashilhumpo Monastery--the home of the Panchen--for confirmation.

On June 3, 1948, the KMT government--collapsing before the communist advance--officially recognized the 10-year-old as

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Panchen, and on August 10, 1949, he was installed in office. As part of the 17-point agreement whereby the PRC took control of Tibet in 1951, the Panchen gained official recognition by the religious hierarchy.

When Qinghai fell to the PLA in 1949, the Panchen came under the control of his Communist Party "advisers." On October 1, 1949, the young boy sent a congratulatory telegram to Mao Zedong, expressing his hope for the "liberation" of Tibet at an early date. He moved to Tibet in 1952, arriving in Lhasa on April 28, where he met with the Dalai before travelling on to the Tashilhumpo Monastery for the first time. Party officials attempted to build the Panchen's prestige as a counterweight to the Dalai and in 1955 appointed him first vice chairman of the preparatory committee for Tibetan government. When open revolt broke out in Tibet and the Dalai fled to India in 1959, the Panchen--only 19 years old--signed a telegram to Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai supporting their decision to dissolve the Tibetan government.

Over the next two years, the Panchen collaborated with the Chinese in the collectivization of agriculture and the disestablishment of religious rule, but appears to have become increasingly uncomfortable in the role the Chinese had carved out for him. He apparently kept links to the opposition and may have secretly encouraged resistance to Chinese policy. By 1961, in the wake of the disastrous Great Leap Forward, the Panchen was in more or less open defiance. He delivered a 70,000-word memorandum to Mao on the deplorable conditions in Tibet and refused to cooperate with the CCP's efforts to make him usurp the Dalai's title as chairman of the Tibetan government. As a result, the Panchen was sidelined, allowed to appear--but not speak--in public.

The Panchen's defiance became public--and highly embarrassing--during a March 1964 rally in Lhasa attended by some 10,000 people. The Panchen departed from a speech written by his party "advisers" and proclaimed his allegiance to a free Tibet and to the Dalai, according to one account. He reportedly was put under house arrest, brought to trial in August, physically abused and publicly humiliated, and finally taken in chains to Beijing. There, according to this account, he was housed in Qincheng No. 1 prison, the facility where many high-level officials were imprisoned during the Cultural Revolution and where the "Gang of Four" are currently incarcerated. Reportedly, he attempted suicide by hunger strike at least once.

The Panchen has publicly acknowledged that his "very critical opinions about what was being done in Tibet" in the

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early 1960s "brought about disaster not only to me but to the whole of China." He says he was held under house arrest for nine years and eight months.

In February 1978, the Panchen was released from custody. He then was elected a vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. Since his release, the Panchen has supported Beijing's line on Tibet, denouncing efforts aimed at independence and claims of human rights violations and political imprisonment.

But the Panchen has also resumed his career of pressuring the central government to liberalize policies, increase investment, and promote more Tibetan cadres. During his periodic inspection tours of Tibetan-inhabited areas--his latest such trip was to Sichuan and Qinghai while the September-October disturbances were taking place in Lhasa--the Panchen has actively propagated his religion, reportedly going so far as to tell his listeners to ignore party propaganda.

Last April, at a press conference held to announce the establishment of the Tibet Development Fund, the Panchen spoke out on several sensitive issues. He affirmed China's open invitation to the Dalai to return and excoriated accusations in the Washington Post of widespread human rights violations in Tibet. Calling on foreigners and Tibetans overseas to contribute to the newly established development fund, he also said that although China has done much to repair the damage to Tibetan culture caused by past policy, "there are still some problems and we are still not totally satisfied." He went on to charge that "some cadres have not fully implemented" Beijing's more liberal line. (

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